United Nations A/71/PV.25

General Assembly
Seventy-first session

Official Records

25th plenary meeting
Thursday, 6 October 2016, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Thomson ..... (Fiji)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 7 (*continued*)

Organization of work, adoption of the agenda and allocation of items

Documentation for the election of the members of the International Law Commission: review of the list of candidates

The President: I would like to consult the General Assembly on a matter concerning sub-item (b) of agenda item 114 on the election of the members of the International Law Commission, which has been scheduled to take place on Thursday, 3 November.

On that day, the Assembly will proceed to the election of 34 members of the Commission, whose terms of office are to commence on 1 January 2017. It should be recalled that, in accordance with the statute of the International Law Commission, the Secretary-General communicated to the Governments of Member States, in document A/71/90, the list of candidates submitted within the required time for the submission of nominations — that is, by 1 June 2016. In documents A/71/90/Add.1 to A/71/90/Add.4, the Secretary-General informed the Assembly of developments concerning candidates, including new candidates and withdrawals, since the issuance of document A/71/90. The statements of qualifications of the candidates are contained in A/71/83 and Add. 1.

In these circumstances, it is necessary for the General Assembly to take a decision as to whether the new candidatures should be accepted in spite of the submission of their names subsequent to the deadline and whether they should be incorporated into a consolidated list of candidates.

It has been the practice of the Assembly to incorporate such late submissions into a consolidated list. If I hear no objection, may I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to request the Secretary-General to issue such a consolidated list of candidates?

It was so decided.

Agenda items 120 and 121

Implementation of the resolutions of the United Nations

Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly

The President: The American writer Mark Twain once observed that "continuous improvement is better than delayed perfection". It is a message of particular relevance to Member States in our ongoing efforts to revitalize the work of the General Assembly.

Since 1991, the United Nations membership has sought to enhance the role, authority, effectiveness and efficiency of the General Assembly through discussion under the agenda item "Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly". It is critical, incremental work that requires a deep commitment to the ideals of the United Nations and a dedication to working to improve the Organization's ability to fulfil its mandate under the Charter.

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At its sixty-ninth and seventieth sessions, the General Assembly adopted two resolutions that each made significant strides in improving the work of the Organization: resolutions 69/321 and 70/305. Both of these resolutions were shepherded through by Ambassador Vladimir Drobnjak of Croatia and Ambassador Wilfried Emvula of Namibia. I would like to thank them for their hard work and leadership as co-Chairs of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly that led to these outcomes.

The inclusion in resolution 69/321 of details on the process to select and appoint the next Secretary-General have transformed and significantly enhanced the legitimacy of that process. The way in which the process was conducted has vindicated the good work done by the Ad Hoc Working Group. I would like to pay particular tribute in this regard to my predecessor, Mr. Mogens Lykketoft. Furthermore, the inclusion in resolution 70/305 of an oath of office, a code of ethics and a series of other measures relating to the President of the General Assembly were particularly prescient developments. I am honoured to be the first President of the General Assembly to begin the term of office by undertaking to fulfil the commitments embedded in these documents, as well as to foster a General Assembly based on ethics, transparency, inclusiveness and effectiveness.

As milestones in the revitalization agenda, resolutions 69/321 and 70/305 have already impacted the work of the Assembly in significant ways, and I would like to touch briefly upon some of these key developments.

The importance of close cooperation and coordination between the Presidents of the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, as well as with the Secretary-General, was emphasized in resolution 70/305. This is an essential development for the efficiency and effectiveness of the United Nations, particularly as it prepares for the task of supporting the implementation of the ambitious 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. I am deeply committed to doing my part in implementing these provisions. To strengthen transparency and improve coherence across the work of the United Nations system, I have undertaken to inform member States about each of my monthly meetings with the Presidents of the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, as well as with the Secretary-General, and the scope of the discussions held.

General Assembly thematic debates continue to be an important mechanism for member States to discuss issues of critical importance to the membership. I have, however, heard clearly the concerns expressed by many delegations at the proliferation of such debates — mandated or otherwise — over recent years. I therefore plan, during the seventy-first session, to minimize the number of such events and to look at creative ways to ensure that Member States and other stakeholders are able to consider the pressing issues of the day in the most effective and efficient way.

The decision to move the timing of elections for non-permanent members of the Security Council to around six months prior to elected members commencing their roles was implemented for the first time earlier this year. This is a practice that has already been commended by those recently elected members as a positive development that will help to facilitate their smooth assumption of responsibilities.

As regards working methods, I intend to continue my close cooperation with the Chairs of the Main Committees to ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of the work of those Committees, as well as to enhance synergy and coherence and reduce potential overlapping in the agendas of the General Assembly and its Main Committees, the Economic and Social Council and other related forums, particularly in the light of the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In this regard, I acknowledge that significant work was undertaken during the seventieth session on the alignment of the General Assembly agenda with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This was a process led ably by Ambassador Maria Emma Mejia Vélez of Colombia, and supported by the Chairs of the First and Second Committees and the President of the Economic and Social Council. I look forward to discussing ways to build on these efforts with Member States over the coming session.

With respect to the General Assembly itself, I will be encouraging the incoming Chairs of the Ad Hoc Working Group to consider ways to strengthen its integrity. In my view, this includes exploring ways to preserve decorum and the special place of the general debate on the calendar of world leaders and the Organization, and to further improve the overall preparation for and effectiveness of this high-level

week. For example, the wisdom of burdening ourselves with four official high-level meetings in the course of the general debate is something that deserves serious consideration. In addition, I would like the focus that was placed on ethics during the seventieth session to be extended to the overall decision-making processes, including in terms of the ethical dimension of elections for positions and roles at the United Nations.

In the matter of the selection and appointment of the next Secretary-General, recent developments have already received significant attention and will continue to be high on the agenda during the seventy-first session. I look forward over the coming days to bringing the appointment process to an orderly conclusion and to facilitating a smooth transition and a strong start for the next Secretary-General. This includes promptly bringing Member States and the Secretary-General-designate together to enable them to engage in substantive dialogues on issues such as the appointment of senior officials or the reform of the Secretariat. Throughout this process, I have tasked two special advisers from my Office with engaging in consultations with Member States and interested groups. They will be advising me on the best way forward. Following the finalization of the selection and appointment process for the next Secretary-General, there will be many lessons to be learned and considered by the Ad Hoc Working Group.

Resolutions 69/321 and 70/305 provide solid ground for future deliberations to enhance the process, including ways to strengthen the role of the General Assembly and to enhance transparency and accountability of the process.

Finally, efforts to strengthen the accountability, transparency and institutional memory of the Office of the President of the General Assembly are already enhancing the functioning of the Office of the President of the General Assembly. In addition to the oath of office and the code of ethics, as part of my commitment to transparency, I have undertaken to ensure that all financial support to the Office will be channelled through the United Nations Trust Fund, where all sources of funds and expenditures will be subjected to public scrutiny. I also intend to ensure that at the end of the seventy-first session, the records and institutional memory of the President of the General Assembly's Office will be preserved by the United Nations record-keeping and archiving facilities, and that a handover summary of best practices and lessons learned will be made available to all Member States.

I am acutely aware of the importance of a smooth transition between General Assembly presidencies, which can be made difficult by calendar arrangements and other factors. Among other issues, we therefore need to look carefully at the timing of the transition in order to enable the incoming President of the General Assembly enough time in office to ensure that the week of high-level meetings runs as efficiently as possible. I look forward to discussing, in due course, ways to improve continuity and transitions further with the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly. I would also like to thank Member States once again, as well as the Secretariat — particularly the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management — and the United Nations specialized agencies, funds and programmes for their support of the Office of the President of the General Assembly, including through secondments of staff.

Much important work lies ahead for all of us in our efforts to strengthen and revitalize the General Assembly and to ensure its role as the pre-eminent deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations. The General Assembly's central role in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is paramount, and we need to ensure that we too are essentially fit for purpose. I am currently looking to appoint co-Chairs of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly, in order to enable it to continue its important work during the seventy-first session. I look forward to the Assembly's continued active contribution to the process in the work ahead.

I now call on the observer of the European Union.

Mr. Van Den Akker (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its member States. The candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania; the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, align themselves with my statement.

I wish to thank you, Sir, for convening today's plenary meeting. We look forward to working with you in the negotiations on resolutions throughout the coming

weeks and months. I would like to thank the President of the Assembly at its seventieth session, Mr. Mogens Lykketoft, for his oversight of and engagement in the General Assembly revitalization process. I would also like to extend my sincerest gratitude to the previous co-Chairs of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly, the Permanent Representatives of Croatia and Namibia, Mr. Vladimir Drobnjak and Mr. Wilfried Emvula, for their excellent work. We wish the new co-Chairs success for the coming year and express our support for the upcoming work, in the hope of continuing the significant progress made in the last session.

The two most recent resolutions on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly have been ground-breaking. Resolution 69/321 paved the way for a more transparent Secretary-General selection process this year, which has improved the public image and accountability of the United Nations. This landmark year's selection process has almost finished and, in that regard, we look forward to the General Assembly plenary session next week. We are grateful to you, Mr. President, for the nomination of two special advisers, Ambassador Ioannis Vrailas and Ambassador Sofia Borges, to facilitate the outcome of the process.

Resolution 70/305 also contains significant new elements that strengthen the accountability, transparency and institutional memory of the Office of the President of the General Assembly. In particular, they include the release of detailed information on the finances, official travel, staffing and activities of the Office of the President, the release of a written handover summary of best practices and lessons learned to the President's successor and to Member States in a standardized format, and the preservation of records and institutional memory during the President's term in office by using existing record-keeping and archiving facilities. Also noteworthy in resolution 70/305 is the agreement on the release of financial disclosures on assumption and completion of the President's duties, in line with the existing United Nations financial disclosure programme. In addition, we agree that all contributions should be vetted through the United Nations Ethics Office and that non-in-kind contributions should be channelled through the United Nations Trust Fund.

Particular progress was also made in other areas, such as the establishment of a code of ethics to be observed by the President, including the members of his or her Office, and of an individual oath of office, as we already witnessed a few weeks ago when you, Mr President, assumed the position. That is complemented by the decision to enhance cooperation and interaction between the permanent missions and the Secretariat through an interactive and comprehensive dialogue. Another aspect worth highlighting is the new progress in efforts to create equal opportunities for men and women and to ensure a gender balance throughout the United Nations system and in the Office of the President. All these and other elements agreed upon in the recently adopted resolution will ensure that the public image of the United Nations, in particular the Office of the President, are enhanced.

Effective multilateralism, with the United Nations at its core, remains key. Our top priorities remain the strengthening of the Organization, based on effective and sustainable funding that is in line with real capacity to pay; and increasing the efficiency of its functioning, an area in which there is scope to do more. In that context, we continue to be committed to revitalization and to supporting efforts aimed at strengthening the role and authority of the General Assembly, in line with the Charter of the United Nations and relevant resolutions. That is especially needed in the context of the global challenges the world is facing today. At the same time, we wish to reiterate that it is imperative for concrete steps to be taken at all levels, with a view to spending more wisely, delivering in new ways and ensuring that the Organization functions within the agreed budget levels. An unceasing effort to find new and creative ways to work is essential if we are to achieve a more effective delivery of mandates and the sustainable use of resources.

We believe that revitalization can be ensured only when the General Assembly takes relevant action on issues of common concern to the international community and produces results. By doing so, it lives up to its role as one of the principal organs of the United Nations. The revitalization of the work of the General Assembly is clearly pivotal for the overall reform of the United Nations.

Focusing on the negotiations ahead of us, we believe that this session's resolutions should aim to consolidate the work achieved so far, and we remain committed to working to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the functioning of the General Assembly. In that regard, enhancing the role of the General Committee to support the work of the General Assembly could

be helpful and needs to be further explored. Further streamlining of the work of the different committees and of the relationship between the Security Council and the General Assembly is still needed.

Finally, let me emphasize the important role of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly. I would like to assure you that the European Union and its member States will continue to constructively engage in the proceedings of the Ad Hoc Working Group.

Mr. Bessedik (Algeria): I thank you, Sir, for all your efforts concerning the sensitive issue of the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly.

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (NAM).

Let me first thank the co-Chairs of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly, the Permanent Representatives of Croatia and Namibia, for having achieved positive outcomes at its previous two sessions. The Non-Aligned Movement underlines the importance of the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly as a political process rather than a procedural matter, aimed mainly at strengthening the role of the General Assembly as the chief deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations in the wider United Nations system. The process should therefore be conducted in an inclusive, transparent and efficient manner. A reinvigorated General Assembly in a more responsive environment, fully exerting its role and authority, would significantly contribute to the strengthening of the wider United Nations system, the improvement of international governance and the enhancement of multilateralism.

A thorough evaluation of the status of the implementation of the General Assembly resolutions on this issue and a clear identification of the causes delaying implementation are of the utmost importance, so that constraints can be progressively eliminated and the revitalization of the General Assembly can achieve its full potential. The Movement stresses the importance of implementing the General Assembly resolutions on a non-selective basis, including the provisions related to the revitalization of its work that require follow-up or further action, as indicated in the inventory chart. It is worth highlighting that the implementation of some provisions depends on the political will of all States Members of the United Nations. In that context, we reaffirm the role and authority of the General Assembly, including on questions related to international peace and security, and its intergovernmental, inclusive and democratic character, which have immensely contributed to the promotion of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the achievement of United Nations goals. NAM reaffirms the intergovernmental nature of the United Nations and draws attention to the need to consult all Member States about the initiatives and activities undertaken within the Organization.

In a context of increased global challenges, the Movement reaffirms that the role of the Secretary-General is one of the most important and challenging in the world. His appointment should be more transparent and democratic and should include all Member States through the effective participation of the General Assembly in the selection and appointment process. In a letter dated 13 September, Mr. Mogens Lykketoft expressed his hope that the General Assembly would be able to reach a decision — whether through the designation of co-facilitators or not — on drafting a consensus resolution appointing the next Secretary-General and that, upon receiving the recommendation from the Security Council, the appointment draft resolution could be adopted in a timely manner in order to give the next Secretary-General enough time to prepare. He also expressed the hope — which we echo — that it will be possible to further consolidate and entrench the principles of transparency and inclusivity.

In its statement with regard to the informal meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly on 29 August, NAM reiterated once again that the process of selection and appointment of the new Secretary-General by the General Assembly — one of the most significant ongoing issues addressed by the United Nations this year — should be carried out in full compliance with the General Assembly's mandate. These include the Assembly's consideration of the draft resolution, which should be preceded by wide and extensive consultations with all States Members of the United Nations, and its voting by secret ballot on the recommendation of the Security Council in conformity with rule 141 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly.

In the light of the latest developments in connection with the selection and appointment of the Secretary-General, NAM continues to call upon the Security Council to consider, not only now but in the future,

the possibility whereby more than one candidacy is endorsed and submitted to the General Assembly in the interest of selecting the best possible candidate from among those possessing and displaying, inter alia, commitment to the purposes and principles of the Charter, extensive leadership and administrative and diplomatic experience.

Furthermore, NAM calls on the Presidents of the General Assembly and the Security Council to continue to hold timely informal meetings for an exchange of views on the ongoing process of the selection and appointment of the future Secretary-General. In the course of the identification and appointment of the best person for the post of Secretary-General, including from among women candidates, due regard shall continue to be given to regional rotation and also to gender equality, as stipulated in paragraph 38 of resolution 69/321 and in paragraph 59 of resolution 51/241. We should not forget that it is up to the General Assembly to select and appoint the Secretary-General, and it is up to the General Assembly to decide upon the recommendation of the Security Council.

We also believe that prevailing practices in the election of executive heads elsewhere in the United Nations system could be suitable for the appointment of the Secretary-General. We therefore recommend considering existing practices. Moreover, NAM would like to emphasize the issue of promises made by candidates in exchange for the support of the permanent members of the Security Council, which is described in the report of the Joint Inspection Unit for 2011 (A/66/34).

We consider that no Member State should have a privileged position in this matter. It is therefore important that candidates not be pressured, either before or after being appointed, into giving posts in the Secretariat to people of any particular nationality in return for political support, since that is clearly contrary to the spirit of the Charter. The selection of the new Secretary-General will test our capacity to live up to the ethical standard required. The General Assembly must not be left out of the picture or merely be asked to rubber-stamp decisions taken by the Security Council.

While we recognize the role of the Security Council, we look forward to a new form of positive cooperation, with broader acceptance and efficiency of the missions and functions of the Secretary-General. That issue, one of utmost importance to all of us, was raised in two letters sent to the President, the first on behalf of NAM, dated 29 June 2016, the second on behalf of the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency group, dated 18 May 2016. On 29 August, a meeting was organized by the co-Chairs to explore those issues with the membership, in response to the invitation of the President. We hope that the process of consultation will continue throughout the negotiations on the draft resolution appointing the Secretary-General.

We take this opportunity to request further clarifications from the President on the next steps and the necessary preparatory procedures to organize broad, transparent and inclusive consultations with all Member States before submitting the resolution on the selection and appointment of the tenth Secretary-General.

Ms. Kasese-Bota (Zambia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

In conclusion, I would like to express our appreciation for the fact that resolution 70/305, the most recent on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly, was adopted by consensus. Nevertheless, we have to emphatically recall that our Group has always shown great flexibility, even when we had misgivings. We hope that our concerns will be fully taken into consideration during the next round of negotiations — which normally should have a positive outcome — on the submission of a draft resolution concerning the selection and appointment of the Secretary-General and its adoption by the Assembly in a transparent, democratic manner.

We note that we have repeatedly emphasized some issues. We will continue to do so until we have achieved our objectives.

Mr. Phansourivong (Lao People's Democratic Republic): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), comprising 10 member States: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Viet Nam and my own country, the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

At the outset, let me congratulate Mr. Vladimir Drobnjak, Permanent Representative of Croatia, and Mr. Wilfried Emvula, Permanent Representative of Namibia, on their excellent work as co-Chairs of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly. ASEAN warmly welcomes

the progress made during their co-chairmanship, as reflected in resolution 70/305, which was adopted by consensus on 13 September. ASEAN would also like to express its appreciation to Mr. Mogens Lykketoft, President of the General Assembly at its seventieth session, for his commitment and effort in moving forward the agenda on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly, especially his commitment to transparency and openness.

ASEAN would like to take this opportunity once again to congratulate the President of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session, Mr. Peter Thomson. ASEAN firmly believes that, under his leadership, the process of revitalization of the General Assembly will yield more positive results.

ASEAN is pleased with the implementation of resolution 69/321, on the process of the selection and appointment of the next Secretary-General, particularly the holding of informal dialogues between the candidates and the General Assembly, which has provided an opportunity for candidates to interact with the States Members of the United Nations. Moving forward, ASEAN believes that the agreement reached in resolution 70/305 should be implemented faithfully to provide for a transparent and inclusive selection process that would ensure that the best possible candidate is selected for the post of Secretary-General.

It is important that Member States be provided with an opportunity to further reinvigorate and revitalize the United Nations. ASEAN believes that revitalization will make the Organization more effective, transparent and inclusive, and thereby better equipped to respond to the needs of Member States. We should all work together to make the General Assembly play its role as the chief deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations.

ASEAN welcomes the reaffirmation in resolution 70/305 of the importance and benefit of interaction between the General Assembly and international or regional forums and organizations dealing with global matters of concern to the international community. ASEAN takes note of the report to the General Assembly on the strategic alignment of future sessions of the General Assembly with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

ASEAN recognizes that complementarities exist between the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the ASEAN Community Vision 2025. We also recognize the importance of dialogue and cooperation between ASEAN and the United Nations in taking forward the work on enhancing such complementarities, as reflected in the ASEAN-United Nations Plan of Action 2016-2020.

ASEAN stands ready to support the strengthening of the institutional memory of the Office of the President. The relevant provisions of resolution 70/305 should be fully implemented. ASEAN expresses its thanks and appreciation to those Member States that have seconded their nationals to the Office of the President. ASEAN is pleased about the adoption of the code of ethics and oath of office by the General Assembly this year as a means to reinforce transparency, accountability and the moral and ethical integrity of the President and his Office.

In conclusion, ASEAN reaffirms its commitment to engage effectively and constructively with all Member States in order to ensure the successful outcome of the Ad Hoc Working Group session on revitalizing the work of the General Assembly. We are confident that, with the political goodwill of all Member States, we will be able to reach consensus and achieve concrete outcomes.

Ms. Abdullah (Malaysia): At the outset, I wish to congratulate the Permanent Representatives of Croatia and of Namibia, co-Chairs of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly at its seventieth session. I join other colleagues in extending our appreciation for their excellent stewardship and leadership, and the commitment shown by all concerned in enabling the Ad Hoc Working Group to make greater progress towards our common goal of revitalizing the General Assembly in all its aspects, including its role, authority, effectiveness and efficiency.

My delegation is encouraged by the recent adoption of resolution 70/305, entitled "Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly", and that of its predecessor, resolution 69/321. Malaysia aligns itself with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Laos on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asia Nations (ASEAN).

United Nations reform, particularly revitalization of the work of the General Assembly, remains an important annual agenda item for all the members of that body. My delegation appreciates the updated annex to the report of the Ad Hoc Working Group (A/70/1003), which has enabled Member States to keep abreast of the implementation of the previous resolutions on

revitalization. We welcome the efforts made by the Secretariat in providing such updates, which have provided Member States with a better understanding of the reasons behind any lack of implementation of the resolutions. While the ongoing review of the inventory of resolutions on revitalization is a step in the right direction, the process should not stop there. Without a doubt, the next logical step is to find ways to address the underlying causes and remove any constraints, thereby paving the way for the eventual implementation of the resolutions.

Malaysia is of the view that we should persevere in our collective effort to ensure that the General Assembly remains the chief deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations. It is the highest authoritative body of the United Nations in that it represents all 193 Member States.

We welcome the General Assembly's continuing support in enhancing United Nations interactions with international, regional and subregional organizations such as ASEAN and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries on various global issues. Malaysia will work closely with other Member States in discussing the drafting of the proposed resolution on the appointment of the Secretary-General in a timely manner and in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, the mandates and other relevant appointment procedures.

Finally, I wish to reiterate my delegation's commitment to working constructively with all Member States in ensuring that the General Assembly maintains its role as the principal policymaking and norm-setting organ of the United Nations.

Mr. Iliichev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We welcome today's meeting of the General Assembly on the revitalization of its work. We support realistic initiatives to increase the effectiveness of the Assembly's work in many ways that can be achieved by improving its working methods and streamlining its agenda, which is now seriously burdened. We presume that there is a need to continue the transition to considering some agenda items on a two- or three-year basis and removing those items that are no longer timely.

We endorse the proposal to unburden the high-level week, particularly the general debate, because when Heads of State and Government and Ministers for Foreign Affairs are in New York, they already have a full timetable of bilateral contacts. It would be sensible to limit the number of high-level events at that time. Those remaining should be spread throughout the session of the General Assembly.

It goes without saying that any attempt to carry out reforms should be based on strict compliance with the distribution of prerogatives among the principal organs of the United Nations, as set out in the Charter of the United Nations.

The Security Council is today completing the process of selecting a new Secretary-General. The candidacy of António Guterres has been recommended to the General Assembly for its consideration. Resolution 69/321 introduced a range of new elements into the procedure for selecting the new Secretary-General, and the recently adopted resolution 70/305 strengthened them. Russia played an active role in their coordination.

We are prepared to engage in further constructive work to optimize existing procedures with the involvement of all Member States. All ideas are worthy of careful consideration. Having said that, we must not forget that our main objective is for the post of Secretary-General to be held by the most worthy candidate. The introduction of new initiatives not based on consensus may lead to divisions in the General Assembly and seriously complicate the process for the selection and appointment of a new Secretary-General that is already under way. We are not, therefore, ready to support any proposal to enact further changes in the existing procedure.

The same applies to the preparation of the General Assembly resolution on the appointment of the Secretary-General. We are opposed to attempts to load that document with controversial political elements when it is essentially a technical document. Furthermore, lengthy discussions on the draft might lead to a delay in the appointment of Mr. Ban Ki-moon's successor, which would be unwelcome from a political perspective and would hardly help the new Secretary-General to familiarize himself with all aspects of the work of the Organization.

In considering the revitalization of the General Assembly, we hear criticisms of the Security Council, including the suggestion that at times it impinges on the prerogatives of other United Nations bodies. We share such concerns. Our Council colleagues are certainly aware of our hesitancy about proposals that the Security Council should consider thematic subjects, especially

generic ones. We believe that the Council should focus on country-based subjects and on issues regarding which it can and should take specific decisions.

We note that at times the Security Council holds open debates that do not directly relate to issues concerning the maintenance of international peace and security. We are sometimes of the impression that the General Assembly has in fact moved into the Security Council Chamber. We believe that debates of that nature should take place in the General Assembly, where all States Members of the United Nations can speak on an equal footing. That would give the revitalization of the General Assembly an additional chance of success.

Mr. Drobnjak (Croatia): Croatia aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union. I will make some brief additional remarks on the issue at hand.

First and foremost, I am confident that I also speak for Ambassador Emvula of Namibia, my valued co-Chair of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly, when I say that we were deeply honoured to facilitate such a vital, important and far-reaching process during both the sixty-ninth and seventieth sessions of the General Assembly. We have truly enjoyed two fruitful years of deliberations in the Ad Hoc Working Group, and we express once again our appreciation for being entrusted with such an important task.

Having before us the very tangible results embodied in resolutions 69/321 and 70/305, resolutions that more than once have been referred to as milestone documents, we can state with certainty that we have indeed proved what can be achieved when there is a willingness on the part of all Member States to engage in a thorough, substantive debate on numerous crucial aspects of the issue of General Assembly revitalization. And through those resolutions the value of consensus once again proved to be pivotal.

Notable advances were most definitely made in some key domains of the work of the Organization, in particular those related to the selection and appointment of the Secretary-General, and to increasing the efficiency, transparency and accountability of the General Assembly and the Office of its President. How do we see this being implemented in practice? Let me give a couple of noteworthy examples.

Several days ago, the handover report of the outgoing President was circulated to Member States. And we recently witnessed a historic moment when the incoming President of the Assembly took the oath of office in this very Hall. We are in the very final stages of the selection and appointment of the next Secretary-General, a process that for the first time, was conducted in an open and inclusive manner, in accordance with resolution 69/321. Some issues were successfully addressed and provided with appropriate, effective solutions. On the other hand, some issues are still to be addressed properly and inclusively during this session and beyond.

I believe we established in our previous deliberations that the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the General Assembly serves as an important platform for exchanging views on pivotal parts of reform processes and for exploring their potential scope and depth. Even when it is not possible to reach consensus on certain elements, it is beyond doubt that the entire membership profits considerably from such exchanges of views. The Working Group should therefore continue to address various issues of interest with a view to deepening our understanding on different positions and to try to bring them closer together.

It should also be noted that during the seventieth session, the Ad Hoc Working Group invited members of the Secretariat on several occasions to provide Member States with additional information and answers to some pertinent questions on the issues at hand. The interactive dialogue with the Secretariat proved to be very useful and mutually beneficial, and it stands out as a practice that is certainly worth following in the future. In that regard, to give just one example, the issue of publishing a *Journal of the United Nations* in all six official languages throughout the year particularly comes to mind.

There are without a doubt many areas to focus on in the forthcoming years and ample room for improvement within the framework of the revitalization of the General Assembly, but I remain confident that the constructive cooperation and consensus-based work we have seen so far, further guided by the able leadership of President Thomson at the seventy-first session, will continue to pave the way for new practices and set new standards in the functioning of the General Assembly.

I thank the Assembly once again for its support, cooperation and confidence.

The Acting President: I further wish to reiterate the President of the General Assembly's gratitude to the Ambassadors of Croatia and of Namibia for co-chairing the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly.

Mr. Pressman (United States of America): As we get an early start on this year's revitalization process, the United States would first like to thank the past year's co-Chairs of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly, the Permanent Representatives of Croatia and Namibia, for their expert leadership throughout the year's debates and their impressive work to maintain consensus on the annual resolution.

During the course of the past year's meetings, the Working Group discussed a very wide range of issues related to the operations of the General Assembly. One area that was particularly important was the work done on increasing transparency and accountability in the Office of the President. Addressing institutional deficiencies in that Office is critical, and we were particularly encouraged by the symbolism of the code of ethics created for members of the Office and the oath inaugurated by our new President when he assumed his duties in September.

For the past few years, the Ad Hoc Working Group has committed much of its time and energy to the process of the selection of the next Secretary-General. As we all know, the Security Council is this morning providing its formal recommendation. We think that António Guterres will be an extraordinary leader of the United Nations. With his appointment by the General Assembly, Mr. Guterres will take the helm of the United Nations at one of the most consequential moments in recent history. He will inherit some of the most complicated challenges to international peace and security, to human rights and to development.

The United Nations needs a visionary leader in these complicated times, and we believe we have found one in António Guterres. With more population displacement in the world than at any time since the Second World War, Mr. Guterres will leverage his past experience as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to give greater attention to the intense, urgent and often dire needs of displaced peoples. The United States is confident in Mr. Guterres's leadership, his dedication to transparency, effectiveness, accountability and fiscal discipline and his commitment to the founding principles and the aspirations of the United Nations.

At UNHCR, António Guterres demonstrated a capacity to deliver real results for the people who needed it most, while reforming a bureaucracy in need of change. The United Nations and the brave men and women who serve the Organization, often in dangerous places far from their home, need and deserve the kind of results-oriented leadership that Mr. Guterres has shown throughout his career. He is in our view the clear choice to oversee the Organization through these uncertain times. We have been guided in this process in large part by the innovations contained in resolution 69/321 and reinforced in resolution 70/305 at the previous session.

The United States believes that these revitalization processes have been carried out faithfully, and we have been strong supporters. Ultimately, we believe the Security Council has put forward a candidate behind whom Member States will rally and whose appointment will send the strongest message that the Organization has selected a leader who can help unify us around the common cause of advancing the noble and critical goals of the United Nations.

As we seem to be starting the revitalization work earlier this year, we hope that will provide opportunities for the Ad Hoc Working Group to return to some of the central issues we believe should be our priority. During the past several years, the Working Group has been called on to look beyond its core mission of increasing the Assembly's efficiency, effectiveness and transparency. However, to broaden our scope beyond those central concerns or to seek to address issues that are considered in parallel in other bodies or committees will only dilute our efforts and run counter to our principal goal of streamlining and rationalizing the Assembly's work.

Going forward, we should prioritize tangible aspects of revitalization that will result in real improvements for the work of this important body. These include streamlining and prioritizing the agenda to avoid wasteful overlap, with an eye to removing outdated topics and biennializing or triennializing what we can. Freeing the General Assembly's agenda of outdated topics would allow it more time to address important contemporary issues, which could serve to increase focus on, and the visibility of, the important work of this body. We should also look to improve the practices and working methods of the Main Committees.

The United States looks forward to continuing its active participation in the revitalization work of the General Assembly and to working with all fellow Member States together on these important issues.

Mr. Gafoor (Singapore): Singapore aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Laos on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and by the representative of Algeria on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

I would like to make five additional points.

First, the revitalization of the General Assembly is a work in progress. We have made great strides during the past two years with the adoption of the two milestone resolutions 69/321 and 70/305 under the able leadership of the Permanent Representatives of Croatia and Namibia. I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate them. However, we must not rest on our laurels. As already stated, the process to improve the work of the General Assembly and its processes must continue, and it must continue on the basis of consensus and enlarging the circle of consensus.

Secondly, we welcome the President's commitment to strengthening the transparency, accountability and institutional memory of his Office. We support the practical initiatives taken by Mr. Mogens Lykketoft, the previous President of the Assembly, notably in preparing and circulating a handover report, which we think has helped not only to strengthen the institutional memory of the Office of the President but also to promote greater transparency in its work. We suggest that the President should build on the handover report by compiling a list of best practices that can be adopted by future incoming Presidents. We also welcome the President's decision to retain several staff members, including his predecessor's Chef de Cabinet. We believe that such initiatives will promote greater continuity and strengthen the operational effectiveness of the Office. We urge the next Secretary-General to make that issue a priority, and we look forward to seeing the Secretary-General's proposals for reviewing the budget allocation for the Office of the President.

Thirdly, the efforts to make the selection and appointment process of the Secretary-General and other executives more open and transparent must continue. We welcome the new standard of openness and transparency, ushered in by former President Lykketoft, that has been established for the selection and appointment of the next Secretary-General. In that regard, we look forward to having an opportunity as soon as possible for the General Assembly to engage in a meaningful interactive dialogue with the Secretary-General designate, and we hope that such an informal dialogue can take place before his formal appointment by the Assembly.

Singapore would also like to suggest that the President of the Assembly consider initiating a regular dialogue with the Secretary-General, which could take the form of a regularly held town-hall meeting with all the members of the Assembly, presided over by the President. The aim would be to continue to build on the directions and understanding established between the General Assembly and the incoming Secretary-General.

The fourth point I would like to make is that the improvements in the appointment process must not stop with the Secretary-General but should extend to all other senior appointments within the Organization. We call on the next Secretary-General to make appointments based on merit, taking into account gender and geographical balance, while also ensuring the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity. We do not believe that appointments of senior officials, particularly Under-Secretaries-General and Assistant Secretaries-General, should be considered as being part of any deal or previously agreed package among a handful of countries.

Fifthly and finally, my delegation considers the issue of improving the working methods of the General Assembly and its Main Committees to be very important. One priority is ensuring that the Assembly's agendas, especially those of its Second and Third Committees, and those of the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary bodies, are working coherently together to support implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Our leaders have adopted the 17 Goals and 169 targets, and the onus is on all of us to ensure that we deliver on them.

We are happy to note that the President has made implementation of the 2030 Agenda a key priority. We look forward to his strategy paper on the subject and will work with him to see how best the United Nations can work with Member States in order to make a difference for our citizens. I would also like to endorse the President's comments on the need to review the arrangements for the high-level week at the start of the Assembly's new session. We should aim for fewer high-

level meetings but try to ensure that the ones we have are more focused and effective.

I would like to conclude by saying that we have every confidence that the President will build on the strong foundations laid down by his predecessor and take the General Assembly to new heights of transparency, accountability, efficiency and legitimacy. My delegation stands ready to continue working closely with him and his team and making a positive contribution to that process.

Mr. Minami (Japan): I would like to start by thanking the President for convening today's meeting and for his statement, which clearly defines his focus and intentions. My delegation concurs with others in considering resolutions 69/321 and 70/305, on revitalization, to be groundbreaking. We would also like to express our sincere gratitude to Ambassadors Vladimir Drobnjak of Croatia and Wilfried Emvula of Namibia for their hard work and skill in chairing the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly.

As we all recall, there was an urgent and pressing need for ensuring transparency in the Office of the President of the General Assembly during the previous session. Indeed, the oath of office and code of ethics established for the President were the most important achievements of resolution 70/305. My delegation would like to express its appreciation for the commitment of President Thomson and his team to continuing to ensure the Office's transparency. We will spare no effort in continuing to work with the Office on this very important matter.

Regarding the selection of the next Secretary-General, my delegation welcomes the recommendation of Mr. António Guterres that the Security Council has just made to the General Assembly. Article 97 of the Charter of the United Nations stipulates that "[t]he Secretary-General shall be appointed by the General Assembly upon the recommendation of the Security Council". While it is legitimate that the entire membership of the Assembly should be involved in that question, we do not have the luxury of time, given the number of immediate challenges we face today. Since no interruption can be allowed, it is our shared duty in the General Assembly to appoint the next Secretary-General as soon as possible,so that the Secretary-General-designate has enough time to prepare for the transition from his predecessor. The President circulated a letter on that point to all the Permanent Representatives on 23 September. My delegation welcomes the initiative he has taken to move things forward as quickly as possible. We will certainly be discussing the subject in the very near future.

I would now like to touch on the subject of the decision-making process in the Assembly. While the General Assembly has appointed the Secretary-General by acclamation since 1971, the records show that the first three Secretaries-General were appointed by a vote in the Assembly. It would be interesting for us to revisit the past practice of acclamation and discuss the issue thoroughly. If a vote were held, it would give the Assembly a voice independent of the Security Council. However, my delegation would like to emphasize that a Secretary-General should receive the unanimous support of the Member States at the end of the process.

During the course of the seventy-first session, it will be important to continue our discussions of revitalization of the Assembly, and particularly and essentially of its working methods. Japan has been very active on the issue of improving working methods. For example, resolution 68/307 moved the dates of the Security Council and Economic and Social Council elections from October to June. In order to achieve the resolution's intended goal of giving new members more time to prepare for membership, Japan, as Chair of the Security Council's Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions, proposed that the Informal Working Group revisit the transitional arrangements for newly elected Council members. On 15 July, after intensive consultations, the Security Council issued a new presidential note, contained in document S/2016/619, which now invites newly elected members to Council meetings starting on 1 October. The note also brings more transparency and inclusivity to the selection process of the Chairs of subsidiary organs.

The issue of rationalizing the General Assembly's work is also an urgent challenge. As we advocated last year, we should consider biennializing or triennializing the agenda items currently being discussed. We look forward to working with the President on that issue again in the current session.

Just as we moved the Security Council and Economic and Social Council elections to earlier dates, we could also consider holding the election of the President of the General Assembly earlier so that

the President-elect has enough time to set up a team and prepare for the handover. My delegation already made that proposal at the March meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group. I believe that the idea is in line with suggestions made by several of the Chairs of the Main Committees that stress the need to hold early elections in order to ensure a smooth transition.

I would like to conclude by reaffirming that Japan stands ready to support the President of the General Assembly and to contribute constructively to discussions of the revitalization of the Assembly's work aimed at further enhancing the effectiveness and transparency of the United Nations.

Ms. Krisnamurthi (Indonesia): Indonesia would first like to thank the President for convening this very important joint debate. We would like to associate ourselves with the statement delivered earlier by the representative of the Lao People's Democratic Republic on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

Many of the challenges confronting our world today are multidimensional and interconnected, and require a response that is also multidimensional, interconnected and well supported by all of us. There is no better platform for dealing with the gamut of global issues than the General Assembly, for it represents, uniquely, the entirety of the United Nations membership, with its rich insights and collective wisdom. The Assembly members' actions, ownership and support are essential to arriving at solutions that can deliver the goods. And while the General Assembly should examine problems of concern to its member States and come up with cogent answers, its members should also effectively implement the resolutions it adopts.

Over the years, the Assembly's Main Committees and subsidiary organs have made commendable progress on a number of issues. The Assembly's high-level meetings on critical problems such as epidemics, natural disasters, peace and security and development have also been vital to enhancing our shared understanding and garnering international support. Yet it is also evident that there are gaps in implementation efforts. All stakeholders should shoulder their responsibilities for implementing Assembly resolutions and decisions, which in turn contributes to the urgent goal of revitalizing the Assembly.

Indonesia fully supports strengthening the role and authority of the General Assembly in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. It is very important that we all promote the Assembly's central position as the chief deliberative, policymaking and representative United Nations organ. In that regard, Indonesia applauds the efforts of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly, under its co-Chairs during the seventieth session, the Ambassadors of Croatia and Namibia. The Ad Hoc Working Group's examination of all four topics before it and proposals on them, as reflected in its latest annual report and inventory chart (A/70/1003), highlight areas of significant progress as well as those that require action.

The past year has seen some key advances that we should build on. Beginning with the landmark resolution 69/321, the joint letter from the Presidents of the Security Council and General Assembly on soliciting candidates for the position of Secretary-General, and the subsequent informal dialogues between Member States and candidates, have opened a new window in making the process of selecting the Secretary-General more participatory. Together, we should see to it that the General Assembly continues to play a leading role in ensuring that the current and future processes for selecting and appointing the Secretary-General are more open, participatory and transparent.

It is also essential that the appointments of executive heads and other senior officials, both in the Secretariat and in the field, be clear examples of a merit-based and balanced geographic representation. In particular, qualified nationals from underrepresented developing countries should be given due consideration.

The seventieth session also saw the elections to the Economic and Social Council and to the non-permanent seats in the Security Council moved forward so that they are now held six months in advance, another positive development. Such improvements in working methods should continue.

Indonesia welcomes resolution 70/305, which builds on resolution 69/321. It breaks new ground, particularly regarding the transparency and accountability of the Office of the President of the General Assembly, and we strongly support that. However, while measures such as the institution of an oath of office, a code of conduct, mandated record-keeping and financial disclosure are welcome, it is vital that the Office of the President also have an adequate budget, with the human resources it needs to ensure its optimal performance, which must

include robust dissemination and outreach to global audiences.

A key subject before the General Assembly at this session and others to come is the effective facilitation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Another is its role in ensuring that conflict prevention and political solutions are accorded primacy through improvements in regional partnerships and United Nations mechanisms, as has been underscored by the three major reviews of United Nations peace operations, its peacebuilding architecture, and its agenda on women and peace and security.

There are many other critical imperatives, some of them related, such as properly addressing the plight of the 65 million people who are currently displaced around the world. Much needs to be done, and it should be done urgently and collaboratively. The General Assembly has a special role to play in helping to address our global challenges. But it can be only as robust as the political and financial backing that Member States give to it and its Main Committees and subsidiary bodies. Together, let us enable the General Assembly to perform its role fully. The delegation of Indonesia will continue to work tirelessly in the Ad Hoc Working Group and other forums to contribute to and support steps that meaningfully strengthen the General Assembly and its mechanisms.

The meeting rose at 11.30 a.m.